

Minutes of the Meeting of the Vestry
Church of the Redeemer, Bryn Mawr, PA
Tuesday, September 12, 2023
7:00-9:00 PM in Rm 125 and via Zoom

Vestry members present: Paul Adkins, John Black, Chris Chojnacki, Jennifer Copas, Kevin Leahy, Lisa Raymond, Edwin Shafer, Joe Spadaro and Chris Zafiriou

Redeemer Staff present: Francesca Merritt, The Rev. Jo Ann Jones, The Rev. Winnie Smith and The Rev. Peter Vanderveen

Absent: Catherine Carruthers, Susan Rushing, Tracy Steele

Recorder: Francesca Merritt

The meeting of the Vestry was called to order at 7:02 pm. Jo Ann Jones gave the opening prayer.

Approval of Consent Agenda - The consent agenda consisted of the minutes of the June 2023 vestry meeting and committee reports. Chris C. made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda, and Jennifer Copas seconded the motion. The Consent agenda was unanimously approved.

Report from Initiative Groups - John Black reported on the current focus of the External Initiatives committee. He thanked Tracy for getting the nametags which were left in vestry mailboxes. There are ongoing discussions about the future of streaming and if Redeemer should limit its use.

New Business:

Credit Line/Vestry mandated accounts & Accounting Warden Report - Chris Z. reported that the church is in strong shape financially, as the stock market has recovered, and pledges keep coming. There are staff vacancies and we have not been spending to the same extent. Had we had the same level of staffing, we would still be on target for budget.

Chris discussed a request for the vestry to approve. In the church's accounting, there are some funds that are designated by the donor, and others designated by the vestry. Those funds are restricted in their use, one such fund is the memorial fund, and the other is the lighting fund. The Finance Committee discussed since we still have a loan balance on this building, and we are looking for some to fulfill their pledge commitment, considering using excess funds in these two accounts to pay down the loan. It could be \$3K a year in savings. It is a recommendation of the Finance Committee that we take those funds down close to their zero balance and pay down the line of credit outstanding.

John Black moved to approve the request and it was seconded by Chris Chojnacki. The vestry unanimously approved the motion. Chris Z. advised that there would be paperwork and a potential petitioning at Orphan's Court to make the funds available.

Stewardship Update - Chris C. reported that communications regarding 2024 stewardship would be going out. The ask amount will change each year. Last year's messaging was an aggressive ask of an 8-12% increase, and from that ask there was a strong windfall. With that backdrop, the communication will include a thanks for meeting the ask last year, noting some of the current challenges, and an ask to meet inflation (3-4%). There will also be a second-tier amount for pledging consideration.

Nominating committee update - Paul will be the chair of the nominee committee. He requested more individuals from the committee, maybe 5 or 6 people to have the meetings run smoothly. The big ask from the vestry is to start thinking of those people you feel would be good vestry members. When the letter goes out in Nov, we specifically would like to consider a few more women, that are in the young mom category, which are one of the areas don't always get represented. Tracy has made it easier to make the meetings more accessible. The process is very easy for committee members and consists of 5-6 short meetings.

Start of program year/need for volunteers - Peter said he did something different on Sunday. He made the announcements and invited newcomers and greeted those around them. When Andrew was playing the bells and no one wanted to stop talking. Peter plans to do that every Sunday, so that there is an opportunity say hello to one another, and to be mindful of those you don't know, even across the aisle. I talked to somebody in the church where this has been their practice for years, it has really changed the way the service begins. It is a great way to help congregation get to know itself.

Peter discussed the several parts of the organization that need to be rebuild including the flower guild, altar guild, and ushers. In the announcements there will be an ask, one per week for volunteers and schedule someone in the narthex who can talk to individuals interested.

We had a great summer program year, with the Prsym camp the playground was filled with kids. The two week camp went very well. Prysm loved the building and loved playing in the building. It has started as a two week program, but it may be 8 weeks next year. They have signed a lease for this year's rehearsals with a sizable raise in rent and have solidified their desire to have all their concerts in the church.

Old Business

Christmas Village – John Black reported on the Christmas Village. There will be an exclusive event for those who reached the higher level and instead of having a pre-party there will be a party after the event. Unique auction items are still a real concern for the event. The first meeting for the new Christmas Village meeting will be next Monday night.

Initiatives Groups – Chris Chojnacki opened by asking if the process of initiative planning had any more “juice to be squeezed” or if we had already identified all the initiatives that we would like to work on. Chris Z. remarked that we should focus on strengthening the programs we do have. Winnie added that even in engaging newcomers, in emails and on the web, it assumes the basic understanding of how parish communities work.

Attendance numbers/analysis – John Black remarked by stating he numbers are good, rebounding coming out of pandemic. Online attendance is steady, we are doing even better. Church school attendance remains strong, at least the trends we can trace are very good. Winnie stated we added one new member last year and there are 10 new names since June.

Villanova School of Business/Marketing Team Update – Peter updated the vestry by discussing an email he received earlier in the week from a student representative. They have a project brief that we have approved. She wrote to me today, collecting a few more requests for proposals from groups. That closes on Thursday, and they stated they would like to send a group of people here next week.

Graphic Design of Arc of Formation – Status – Peter explained that Kim Landry leant her expertise in the documents for Legacy into Promise campaign. Peter would like to use her again as a graphic designer and have her frame some of the documentation for the Arc of Formation to explain what the Arc is to the congregation.

Rector's Breakfasts – Peter had sent many invitations at the end of the summer and each person stated that they were not around. He will schedule some breakfasts for September with Al Greenough assisting. There will be a more public announcement to the congregation that these breakfasts are being held and if add their names to an interest list.

Vestry Calendar – Status – Ken Garner was not present to discuss the calendar, but Chris Z remarked that he populates the Google calendar quite nicely.

Rector's Report – Peter explained that this is a great year of transition. Andrew Senn, the new music director, started Sunday, and he did a beautiful job. He has been extremely creative about different parts of the job, adding rehearsal times and it has been very fun to have that kind of very focused energy.

Peter described a bit of the interview process to the vestry. There were 5 great candidates, and 4 came here. The choir went above and beyond in the selection process and Peter thanked Paul Adkins for his help as well. There are a number of repairs needed for the organ. The pipework doesn't fit together, and there is quite a lot of work on the console to get it to work together. You could see other organists who interviewed, not happy with the instrument. Andrew came in and could play anything. For all the services that we have, he came across as the one who could take the most delight and the most ease.

The administrator search took a backseat for a while though we are very close to making an offer to someone. If this person comes, I'd be delighted, since they are young and talented and knowledgeable about buildings, church fundraising and church financial systems. Realistically, we are looking at mid to late October start to have that work out.

During this process we got resignation from Betsy Wolford, and we are looking at having Fran add to her position to have a fuller position with us. The administrator will take on the complex parts of that role. Fran will be the one to help along if you have financial questions. Mike Wolford will be taking over payroll responsibilities with assistance from Betsy.

It has been difficult to fill the role of Director of Children's Ministries. Peter asked the vestry if they would consider hiring professional teachers instead. We have the option, I think, to offer substantial pay to people willing to come in as staff teachers, who know the material, and know how to work with kids. Winnie has taken on oversight of the program.

Rector's Warden Report - Tracy has been very involved in hiring the new music director and looks forward to his start at Redeemer.

Winnie gave the closing prayer. Chris Z. congratulated Winnie on her marriage. The meeting ended at 8:56 pm.